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Cannibalising Nature: Resituating Helio Oiticica's *Tropicália* as ethical-environmental practice.

Timothy Morton introduces the concept of 'dark ecology' in *Ecology Without Nature* (2009) and *The Ecological Thought* (2010) in a significant challenge to the continued use of the term 'nature' as an ontologically stable referent. Dark ecology addresses the continuing reification of nature in the realm of the aesthetic and offers an alternative perspective, a "perverse, melancholy ethics that refuses to digest the object into an ideal form" (Morton 2009: 195). This ethics works to reframe existing notions of nature and the ecological through a sense of openness to radical otherness, to that which cannot be easily assimilated. Morton's reference to 'digesting' the object offers an interesting conceptual link to the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's writings from the 1920s on cannibalism/anthropophagy that influenced a later generation of Brazilian artists including Helio Oiticica.

Oiticica's 1967 installation *Tropicália* combines natural and artificial materials employing architectural forms with sand, gravel, live plants, birds, fabrics, a TV screen and scented sachets in an attempt to immerse the viewer in a 'suprasensorial' environment that Oiticica described as giving "the powerful sensation of being devoured". This paper will extend the discussion of *Tropicália* beyond its familiar readings in relation to Brazilian identity politics to include a reconsideration of the work as enacting a dark ecological ethics. *Tropicália* will be reframed as a situated environmental art practice that explores the material conditions of inhabited spaces and the relations of materials to processes, sites, and the social and cultural contexts of production and presentation.

Biography

Fiona Curran is an artist based in London currently researching for a practice-related PhD at The Slade School of Fine Art - *(Dis)Locating Reality: Towards a Fractured Topography of the Present*. This research project explores the impact of digital information technologies on landscape and the environment and considers the critical significance of landscape as both site (material) and sight (representation) in examining conditions of power in the context of 21st century late-capitalism. It seeks to contribute to the discourse on "environmental art" whilst also contesting the application of this term to a niche area of art practice. Recent exhibitions include *Beach Fatigue* at Carslaw St* Lukes, London (solo); *Riff* at Baltic39, Newcastle; *Easy Does It* at David Dale Gallery, Glasgow, Aid & Abet, Cambridge and Supercollider,

Blackpool. Recent site-specific projects include *Art Across The City*, Swansea and *Framing Identity: Tatton Park Biennial* at Tatton Park, Cheshire.